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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3893

INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1370

RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 3535

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3328

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000007

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA, PM/FO

IO FOR A/S HOOK; PDAS WARLICK

P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY

USUN FOR KHALILZAD, WOLFF, SCHEDELBAUER

NSC FOR ABRAMS, YERGER, MCDERMOTT, RAMCHAND

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR UNSC MOPS LE IS

SUBJECT: LEBANON: SINIORA URGES UNSC ACTION USING 1701 MODEL

REF: BEIRUT 1808

Classified By: CDA William Grant for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

SUMMARY

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¶11. (C) On January 2, PM Siniora convoked Ambassadors and Charges from UNSC members represented in Beirut and urged UNSC action to produce an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. He suggested the Council use UNSCR 1701, which marked the end of 2006 Lebanon-Israel conflict, as a model. He argued that Israel was repeating with Hamas the same mistake it made with Lebanon-based Hizballah in 2006, seeking to eliminate a threat but actually making it stronger. He said he had heard that the Secretary would be traveling to the region and that he would try to call her when she did. Siniora was joined by FM Fawzi Salloukh, who earlier in the day convoked P-5 COMs in a separate meeting with a similar message. While Salloukh urged the P-5 to support the Libyan text of a new UNSCR, Siniora did not mention it. End Summary.

¶12. (C) Ambassadors or Charges from UNSC members met with PM Fouad Siniora and FM Fawzi Salloukh on Gaza, at Siniora's request, on the afternoon of January 2 in the Grand Serail. The P-5 plus Mexico, Japan, Austria and Turkey were represented. Earlier that day, Salloukh called a similar meeting for the P-5 only. The Russian Ambassador missed the earlier Salloukh meeting but was present for the Siniora meeting.

ISRAEL MAKING SAME MISTAKES IT MADE IN LEBANON, SINIORA SAYS

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¶13. (C) Siniora compared Israel's current "mistakes" with Gaza to similar mistakes it has made in Lebanon. In 1982, he said, Israel invaded Lebanon to finish off the PLO, but it did not succeed and instead its actions led to the creation of a new threat, Hizballah. In 2006, Israel capitalized on the kidnapping of two of its soldiers to go after Hizballah but, again, it did not succeed in weakening the threat against it. Beyond that, Israel's actions in Gaza will destroy the institutions of the state there and promote extremism, Siniora argued. And they will bring a new set of problems for the region.

¶14. (C) While criticizing Israel's "onslaught," Siniora acknowledged that a solution must offer "something to everyone." But he was firm that the first step should be an

immediate ceasefire. He thought that electoral politics were motivating Israel's actions. He suggested that the UNSC act quickly on a resolution to end hostilities based on the model of UNSCR 1701, the resolution that marked the end of the 2006 Lebanese-Israeli conflict. He did not mention the draft Libyan UNSCR text on Gaza currently before the Security Council. At the meeting for the P-5 earlier in the day, FM Salloukh had urged P-5 support for the Libyan text, and did not mention 1701.

HIZBALLAH WILL NOT TAKE ACTION THAT GIVES ISRAEL AN EXCUSE TO RETALIATE

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¶15. (C) Siniora seemed to want to convey that Hizballah supported the position he was articulating and would not engage in any aggression against Israel. He made a point of saying that he was conveying the position of the government of Lebanon (which includes Hizballah and other opposition parties) and that it represented a "position of consensus among the Lebanese." He asserted that all Lebanese parties agree not to take any actions that would threaten violence in southern Lebanon, the area that borders Israel. We "recognize the recent attempts" to cause trouble with Israel, meaning the LAF discovery on December 25 of eight Katyusha rockets aimed at Israel from southern Lebanon, and will "keep our eyes open" to prevent them, he said.

¶16. (C) In the meeting with Salloukh earlier in the day, Charge repeated the points Ambassador Sison had made to Siniora in a December 31 meeting (reftel) that Lebanese

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officials should urge Hizballah not to take any offensive actions against Israel at this time. Salloukh, who is close to opposition figure Nabih Berri, a Hizballah political ally, responded that Hizballah is cautious and does not want to pursue aggression as this would give the Israelis an excuse to retaliate.

SARKOZY TO EXPAND TRIP TO REGION

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¶17. (C) The French Ambassador noted during the meetings that President Nicholas Sarkozy had expanded his regional trip scheduled for next week and will travel to Egypt, Israel and the West Bank, as well as Syria and Lebanon, January 5-6. Sarkozy will be in Damascus in the morning of the 6th and then travel to Lebanon to meet with Sleiman, Siniora and Berri and the French UNIFIL contingent before returning to Paris that evening.

GRANT